

APPARENT SKILL GAME USED AS A BONUS ROUND ON A GAMING MACHINE

1 This application relates to a gaming machine and more
2 particularly to a gaming machine in which a bonus round game
3 appears to be a game of skill or knowledge, but in fact, is a
4 game of pure chance in which the outcome of the play of the
5 gaming machine is randomly determined prior to the game of
6 skill or knowledge being displayed on the gaming machine.

7

Background of the Invention

In the typical gaming casino, there are many types of casino games. Electronic and mechanical gaming machines have a significant share of the casino floor and can be generally grouped into two categories: games of pure chance and games of skill.

14 Representative of a game of pure chance is the conven-
15 tional slot machine. After making a wager, the player
16 activates the slot machine by pulling a handle or pressing a
17 button. The reels of the slot machine spin and, when the
18 reels stop spinning, the outcome is displayed to the player.
19 Winning combinations result in a payout to the player based on
20 the amount of the player's wager. The player does not have to

1 make a decisions during the play of the slot machine that may
2 affect the outcome of the spinning of the reels.

3 Representative of a game of skill is the conventional
4 video draw poker gaming machine. After making a wager, the
5 player is dealt five cards face up. The player selects which
6 cards, if any, the player wishes to hold, the unheld cards are
7 discarded and replacement cards are dealt for the discarded
8 cards. The final five card hand is analyzed to determine its
9 poker hand ranking and the player is paid for winning poker
10 hand rankings based on the amount of the player's wager.
11 Because of the hold and draw decisions made by the player, the
12 skill of the player can affect the success or not of the
13 player during the play of video draw poker.

14 There are also other electronic casino games that have
15 been introduced into gaming casinos in recent years that use a
16 "secondary event" bonus round to provide additional payouts to
17 the player. In a typical secondary event bonus round game,
18 the player first achieves some outcome on the main game or
19 first level of the gaming machine. This first level outcome
20 that occurs during the play of the basic casino game qualifies
21 the player to play a secondary event bonus round in which the
22 player engages in another chance event to determined the

1 amount to be won by the player.

2 One of the most popular secondary event bonus round games
3 was "Wheel of Gold" marketed by Anchor Gaming Company. This
4 game used a three reel slot machine as the main game or first
5 level. If the player lined up a "Spin" symbol on the pay line
6 of the third reel, the player qualified to go on to the
7 secondary event bonus round. In the secondary event bonus
8 round of the "Wheel of Gold" game, a rotating wheel similar to
9 a Big Six Wheel is spun by the player who then receives the
10 payout shown on the pay line when the wheel stops rotating.

11 Other secondary event bonus round games have followed.
12 On the ODYSSEY multi-game machine marketed by Silicon Gaming
13 Company, there is a secondary event game known as "Fort Knox"
14 used in connection with a reel slot machine game. Each time
15 the player spins the reels of the slot machine, a random
16 number between 0 and 9 is selected. The random number
17 selected is compared to a pre-established ten digit "code
18 number" and when the player has successfully matched all ten
19 digits of the code number, the player is taken to a secondary
20 event bonus round screen in which the player selects one of
21 three doors behind which is a payout amount awarded to the
22 player.

P A T E N T
D O C U M E N T

1 Secondary event bonus round games have been added to
2 video poker games also. In a game known as "Million Coin
3 Scratch Poker" marketed by Boyd Gaming Group, the main game
4 is a standard video draw poker game. Whenever the player
5 achieves a flush in the main video poker game, the player is
6 paid for achieving a flush and then is taken to a second
7 screen in which the secondary event game is displayed. The
8 secondary event game involves the player selecting five cards
9 from a fifty-two card face down display; in effect, the player
10 is playing a hand of five card stud poker. The player wins
11 payouts depending on whether the player achieves particular
12 poker hands during this secondary event game of five card stud
13 poker.

14 There is a need in the casino gaming business for new and
15 creative games, including new and creative secondary event
16 bonus round games, to capture the interest of the gaming
17 patron and stimulate additional casino play.

18 It is an object of the present invention to provide a new
19 form of a secondary event casino game that gives the player
20 the feel that he is playing a game of skill or knowledge, but
21 in fact the outcome of the secondary event bonus round game
22 has been predetermined.

1 It is a feature of the present invention to provide a
2 secondary event bonus round game in which the player
3 participates in an apparent game of skill or knowledge, but
4 the outcome of the secondary event game has been
5 predetermined. At the commencement of the secondary event
6 game, an outcome is randomly determined, i.e. the amount of
7 the award to be made to the player is randomly selected from a
8 plurality of possible awards. The player then engages in what
9 appears to be a game of skill or knowledge which continues
10 until the player has achieved a result that awards the player
11 the predetermined payout.

12 It is an advantage of the present invention that the
13 player is allowed to enjoy the challenge and entertainment of
14 participating in a game of skill or knowledge, but the award
15 to the player is independent of the player's ability. Thus,
16 players of lesser skill or knowledge level are not penalized,
17 but are awarded at the same monetary level as the players with
18 higher skill or knowledge levels. Also, there is no incentive
19 for a player to attempt to improperly manipulate the game of
20 skill or knowledge component of the present invention, since
21 the award to the player during the secondary event portion of
22 the play of the gaming machine has been predetermined.

1 Other objects, features and advantages of the present
2 invention will become apparent from a consideration of the
3 following detailed description.

5 Summary of the Invention

The present invention comprises the feature of including an apparent game of skill or knowledge as a secondary event bonus round game which is won by the player during the play of a conventional electronic or mechanical gaming machine. A gaming machine, such as a slot machine, poker game machine, keno game machine, bingo game machine or other casino game machine is first played by the player and, upon the occurrence of a predetermined outcome of the gaming machine, the player wins an opportunity to play the secondary event bonus round game. At the commencement of the secondary event bonus round game, the computer controls of the electronic gaming machine select the amount of the award to be won by the player during the play of the secondary event game. The player then plays out the secondary event bonus round game, which appears to the player to be a game of skill or knowledge. Regardless of how the player fares during the play of the secondary event bonus round game, the play of the secondary event bonus round game

1 continues until the player has achieved the predetermined
2 amount that was selected by the computer controls. Thus, the
3 player's skill or knowledge level or ability during the play
4 of the secondary event bonus round game has no affect on the
5 amount won by the player during the play of the secondary
6 event bonus round game.

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Brief Description of the Drawings

9 Figure 1 shows a flow chart that depicts the steps
10 involved in the method of play of the present invention.

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Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

13 The method of play of the present invention commences
14 with a player making a wager and playing a conventional
15 electronic or mechanical gaming machine. Any suitable
16 electronic or mechanical gaming machine can be used for the
17 play of this basic game, such as a slot machine, poker game
18 machine, keno game machine, bingo game machine or other casino
19 game machine. During the play of the video slot machine, the
20 player will achieve winning and losing occurrences as is
21 conventional.

1 During the play of the gaming machine, the player will
2 achieve occurrences which earn the player the opportunity to
3 play a secondary event bonus round game. For example, the
4 player could achieve a combination of symbols on a pay line of
5 the video slot machine for which the player wins a chance to
6 play a "Bonus Round". Any suitable combination of symbols
7 could be used such as simply having one or more "Bonus Round"
8 symbols stopping on a pay line.

9 Alternatively, the player could achieve a predetermined
10 combination on a video poker machine, such as a Four-of-a-
11 Kind, that would also award the player a bonus round. Similar
12 occurrences during the play keno, bingo or other casino gaming
13 machines could also award the player a bonus round of play.

14 When the player wins the chance to play the secondary
15 event game, the computer controls randomly select, from a pool
16 of possible awards, the amount of the award to be won by the
17 player during this secondary event game. This amount is
18 selected before the player begins playing the secondary event
19 game. Unlike prior secondary event games that have been
20 offered to players on previous gaming machines, the amount to
21 be won by the player in the secondary event game of the
22 present invention is predetermined and is independent of any

1 actions by the player during the play of the secondary event
2 game.

3 For example, the player achieves a "Bonus Round" symbol
4 on a pay line of the video slot machine and the player wins a
5 chance to play the "Bonus Round". The computer controls of
6 the video slot machine then randomly select 500 coins as the
7 amount to be won by the player during the secondary event game
8 and this selection of 500 coins is made before the player
9 begins to play the "Bonus Round".

10 The "Bonus Round" then starts. The player participates
11 in what appears to be a game of skill or knowledge, such as
12 answering a series of trivia questions. The video screen
13 display of the gaming machine displays a group of multiple
14 choice questions in which the player selects one answer from a
15 group of answers by using the buttons on the gaming machine or
16 by touching the selected answer on the video screen which uses
17 touch screen technology. The player could be asked five
18 questions and each answer could be worth 100 coins.

19 If the player gets all five questions right, the player
20 wins the 500 coins which have been preselected as the amount
21 to be won by the player during this secondary event game
22 "Bonus Round". Because the player has earned the full amount

1 of 500 coins that had been preselected by the computer
2 controls of the gaming machine to be won by the player during
3 the "Bonus Round", the secondary event game would be over at
4 this point. The amount won by the player is paid to the player
5 by dispensing coins directly from a coin hopper into a payout
6 tray on the gaming machine, or by accruing credits to the
7 player on a credit meter of the gaming machine or in any other
8 conventional manner of paying the player.

9 In the event that the player does not get all five of the
10 trivia questions correct, the player could then be asked more
11 trivia questions until the player has five correct answers at
12 which point the player appears to have earned the 500 credits.

13 In fact the player's skill or knowledge level in answering
14 the trivia questions is irrelevant since the gaming machine
15 will continue to ask the player trivia questions until the
16 player has achieved a sufficient number of correct answers to
17 earn the predetermined amount of 500 coins as his award for
18 the "Bonus Round".

19 Alternatively, the player could be limited to a fixed
20 number of questions to earn the 500 credits. If the player
21 has not earned the entire 500 credits after the fixed number
22 of questions have been asked, then the player could be given

1 the chance to play a consolation round of a different second-
2 ary event game. During the consolation round, the player
3 would win the necessary additional award to bring his total
4 award during the secondary event game up to the predetermined
5 amount of 500 coins.

6 For example, the player could get three questions correct
7 during the trivia game and earn 300 coins. Since the player
8 is still 200 coins short of winning the predetermined amount
9 of 500 coins, the player would then be presented with a slot
10 machine game. The player would then play the slot machine
11 game for one or more spins of the reels until the player has
12 achieved a total award of 500 coins.

13 Other methods of displaying this secondary event game to
14 the player may be used. For example, suppose the computer
15 controls randomly select 1200 coins as the amount to be
16 awarded to the player during the secondary event game. The
17 player is then asked four trivia questions. The value of each
18 correct answer is not shown to the player until after the
19 player has answered all four questions. This allows the
20 computer controls of the gaming machine to adjust the value of
21 each correct answer so that the total award to the player is
22 1200 coins regardless of the number of correct answers

1 selected by the player.

2 If the player gets four correct answers, then each
3 correct answer is shown as being worth 300 coins. If the
4 player gets three correct answers, then each correct answer is
5 shown as being worth 400 coins. If the player gets two
6 correct answers, then each correct answer is shown as being
7 worth 600 coins. If the player gets only one correct answer,
8 then each correct answer is shown as being worth 1200 coins.

9 If the player is the village idiot and gets zero correct
10 answers, then the player can be awarded a booby prize in the
11 amount of 1200 coins for being qualified to fill the "idiot"
12 vacancy available at the nearest village. Alternatively, for
13 no correct answers, the player can be shown a video screen
14 having a plurality of prize locations. Regardless of the
15 prize location selected by the player, the amount of the prize
16 is 1200 coins which corresponds to the award preselected by
17 the computer controls of the gaming machine before the player
18 begins play of the secondary event game.

19 The examples discussed above are only representative of
20 the many ways that the amount of the preselected award can be
21 displayed to the player during the secondary event game "Bonus
22 Round". The method of the present invention allows the player

1 to compete in an apparent game of skill or knowledge and yet
2 still win the randomly selected award preselected by the
3 computer controls of the gaming machine before the start of
4 the secondary event game "Bonus Round".

5 Figure 1 shows a flow chart that depicts graphically the
6 steps involved in the present invention.

7 While the invention has been illustrated with respect to
8 several specific embodiments thereof, these embodiments should
9 be considered as illustrative rather than limiting. Various
10 modifications and additions may be made and will be apparent
11 to those skilled in the art.

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